

Recd
972
B416

July 1899

EARLY EXPLORATION IN NORTH-WEST CANADA.

By ALEXANDER BEGG, C.C., Author of *The History of British Columbia*.

THERE is probably no portion of the Earth's surface which has attracted so much public attention as that which is popularly known as the "Klondike," by which is meant that portion of the Yukon region having for its centre the fabulously rich gold-bearing mines on the streams emptying into the Yukon river, near Dawson; one of those streams is the Klondike.

It may be of interest to the reader to learn a few particulars respecting that vast and rich mineral region, to know who was the first explorer to enter the country, and when it was first occupied by white men. This region is of immense extent, being estimated to be 1100 miles long from north to south, 800 miles in width from east to west, and to contain nearly 600,000 square miles, or about 370,000,000 acres.

To the celebrated Sir Alexander Mackenzie, one of the partners of the Montreal North-West Fur Company, who in 1789 travelled to the Arctic Ocean by the Mackenzie river, which will always bear his name, belongs the honour of having taken the first steps towards making known even the outlines of what was then a *terra incognita*.

In 1792-3, after a voyage to England, Mackenzie proceeded to the Pacific coast, following a south-westerly course from Lake Athabasca (lat. 59° N. and long. 111° W.), *via* Peace river, and thence westward, in about lat. 54° N. to long. 133° W., to a stream, flowing south, which he mistook for a branch of the Columbia river. In 1808 Mr. Simon Fraser explored that river to its outlet on the coast, and it was named after him "Fraser river." Mackenzie, desirous of reaching the coast without going farther south, changed his course more to the west, and arrived at Pacific tide water July 22nd, 1793, at about lat. 52° N. and long. 129° W. Thus, in a totally unknown country, amongst savages, he had journeyed over seven degrees of latitude and eighteen degrees of longitude.

Until after the amalgamation of the North-West Fur Company with the Hudson Bay Company, in 1821, the vast region north of Lake Athabasca and west of Mackenzie river was unoccupied by white men. The North-West Fur Company had penetrated west, following Mackenzie's exploration, and south by the Columbia river to its outlet in the Pacific at Astoria. They had full possession of the whole country to the west of the Rocky mountains, which they named NEW CALEDONIA. The fur trade was extended enormously by them, but was chiefly carried on to the south of the Athabasca route.

After the amalgamation of the two companies in 1821, the business was carried on in the name of the Hudson Bay Company. They extended their trading-posts northward along Mackenzie river and westward to the Pacific. The officers sent in advance to explore, to build trading-posts or forts for defence, and to open up a trade with the natives, were men who had experience in the business, and were thoroughly reliable, being generally chosen to fill those important positions on account of their

capacity for management. They were required to keep a diary in which was entered every day the work performed by the men, amount of trade transacted, etc. etc.

The first record obtainable pertaining to the Yukon country is from 1834, when it was under the management of Mr. Robert Campbell, a native of Glenlyon, Scotland. He joined the Hudson Bay Company in 1832, and two years afterwards was placed in charge of the Mackenzie district with headquarters at Fort Simpson, which is situated at the confluence of the Liard river with the Mackenzie, in about lat. 52° and long. 122° .

Before the year 1838 Mr. Campbell had established several trading-posts on Liard river, and had reached Dease lake, the western headwaters of the Liard. He established a trading-post there, and with a few of his men crossed the "divide" or height of land between Dease lake and Stikine river, intending to proceed to the coast at Wrangel. On his way he was met by a large party of coast Indians and captured, but with his men escaped and retreated towards Dease lake. In their flight they destroyed an Indian bridge over the Tahltan to prevent pursuit. Shortly after the coast Indians joined the Dease Lake Indians, attacked the trading post, pillaged it, and drove Mr. Campbell and his men out of their country.

Mr. Campbell then apparently shaped his course northwards along the Liard, for in 1840 we find trace of him at Lake Frances, the northern source of the Liard, where he established a trading-post. He next proceeded westward across the height of land to Lake Finlayson, which he discovered and named. In two days' further travel he reached a large river which he named Pelly. Returning to Fort Frances in 1843, Mr. Campbell again crossed the height of land to Pelly river, which he followed until he reached its confluence with another larger river flowing from the south, which he named Lewes. The junction of those two rivers forms the main branch of the Yukon river. Mr. Campbell was *the first white man* to stand on that spot.

He continued his explorations down the river for about seven hundred miles to the confluence of the Porcupine river with the Yukon. At this junction, about lat. $56^{\circ} 50'$ and long. 145° , Fort Yukon was established. Mr. G. Bell, of the Hudson Bay Company, in 1846 proved that establishment to be about 150 miles west of the 141st meridian, or the boundary line between British and Russian territory; but no Russians or any traces of their occupancy were seen. From Fort Yukon Mr. Campbell ascended Porcupine river to its eastern source, and crossed the height of land to Peel river, a small tributary of the Mackenzie, not far from its outlet in the Arctic Ocean. From the outlet of Peel river he ascended the Mackenzie to Fort Simpson, his headquarters, at the mouth of the Liard.

Again, in 1848, Mr. Campbell crossed to the Pelly, and descended that river to Fort Selkirk, which he named, and established a trading-post there. That fort was pillaged by the Chilcat Indians in 1851. After the pillage Mr. Campbell returned to Fort Frances.

During 1852-3 Mr. Campbell made a remarkable journey east. He

left White river, near the Alaskan boundary, on September 6th, ascended the Pelly to one of its sources, and crossed the mountains to a branch of the Liard, which he followed to Fort Simpson, arriving there October 21st. Winter having set in, he started on snow-shoes to make a journey to Crow Wing on the Mississippi river, extending over sixteen degrees of latitude. He had with him three men and a train of dogs. The dogs were changed at the Hudson Bay Company's trading-posts along the route.

The route from Fort Simpson lay by Great Slave Lake, Lake Athabasca, Ile à la Crosse, Carlton House, Fort Pelly, Fort Garry (Winnipeg), and Pembina. On March 13th Mr. Campbell reached Crow Wing, where he obtained horses for the journey to Chicago. From Chicago he continued his journey eastward, and arrived at Montreal on the 1st of April. Such was his despatch that he was enabled to report himself in London, at the Hudson Bay House, on the 18th of April 1853. From his starting-point on the Pelly-Yukon he had made a continuous journey of 9700 miles, nearly half of which was through an uninhabited wilderness; and of this distance some three thousand miles were passed over in the dead of winter on snow-shoes.

Eventually circumstances combined to produce changes in the trade of the Hudson Bay Company. The remote trading-posts along the Yukon and Porcupine and Fort Selkirk were abandoned. The Russian Fur Company did not build trading-establishments on the mainland. The Hudson Bay Company, however, in 1834 built a trading-post on Nass river, and being desirous of extending their trade along Stikine river, a vessel loaded with supplies was sent, in charge of factor Ogden, to the mouth of the river. On reaching the mouth it was intercepted by two armed Russian vessels which fired upon it.

Retreating beyond range of the shot, the crew cast anchor. Soon a boat from the shore approached and intimated that if they desired to save themselves, their property, and their vessel, they must weigh anchor at once and return to their own harbour. With this notification they complied, and returned to Fort Vancouver, near the mouth of Columbia river. A report of the affair was transmitted to London, along with a claim of £20,000 sterling as damages for interference and the loss of trade in consequence of the posts up the country not receiving their supplies.

After considerable delay the claim was waived, and the dispute settled by the Russians agreeing to grant to the Hudson Bay Company a lease of all their territory lying between Cape Spencer (lat. $58^{\circ} 15' N.$, long. $136^{\circ} 30' W.$) and Cape Chacon (lat. $54^{\circ} 40' N.$), on condition that the Hudson Bay Company paid an annual rental of two thousand land-otter skins, and at the same time supplied the Russian colony at Sitka with a large quantity of provisions at moderate rates. This lease gave the Hudson Bay Company full control of the fur trade with the natives, and power to prevent United States traders from trespassing in the various channels and inlets to which they had access from the ocean.

The arrangement gave satisfaction to both parties. The irritation

caused by the unsettled line of demarcation disappeared. Wrangel and Stikine river and all the islands south of Cross Sound (Cape Spencer) were added to the former immense hunting-grounds of the Hudson Bay Company. It is interesting to note how exact and perfect was the management of the Company, and how uniformly their trading-posts were extended to more remote places, viz., to Nass in 1834, under Mr. Ogden's management, and to Fort Frances, Fort Liard, and Dease Lake, under the supervision of Mr. R. Campbell.

In 1840, Fort Durham was built at Taku, but was shortly afterwards abandoned, as it was decided that it would be more profitable to trade with the natives from the decks of the Company's vessels than to maintain permanent trading-posts. In 1843, when Fort Victoria was completed, all the Pacific coast forts were closed, with the exception of Fort Simpson, near Nass river. (This Fort Simpson should not be mistaken for that of the same name on Mackenzie river.) Fort Durham on Taku Inlet was the most northern trading-post built on the Pacific coast.

Whilst the changes referred to were taking place, the remote, outlying Yukon region was, in a measure, lost sight of. The exclusive privileges of the Hudson Bay Company over that portion of the continent of North America, west of the Rocky mountains, had been extended for twenty years. Their lease from the Russians had been renewed; general prosperity prevailed. Changes, however, were at hand. New Caledonia and Vancouver Island were formed into a Crown colony. Its northern boundary was fixed at the 60th degree of north latitude. Its western boundary was not defined otherwise than by the Anglo-Russian Treaty of 1825—nor was it necessary under the Russian lease.

The lease, however, terminated in 1867, when the United States Government purchased "Russian America," together with all its rights and privileges. The gold excitement of 1858, in British Columbia, created many changes. The result was that a large number of the floating mining population remained in the country, and engaged in developing it, so that little attention was paid to the northern country, with the exception of the Stikine river and Dease lake region, in connection with a temporary gold rush.

From San Francisco, *via* St. Michael's and along the Yukon to Fort Cudahy, considerable trade was carried on; but until after Dr. G. M. Dawson's visit to the Yukon region, in connection with the Canadian Geological Survey, in 1887-8, no reliable maps of that country were published. Dr. Dawson entered the country by the Stikine river and Dease lake—thence by Liard river, following Mr. R. Campbell's route, already referred to. From Fort Selkirk, Dr. Dawson travelled by the Yukon, to the point on that river named "Dawson" after himself. He returned south by Lewes river and portages to Lynn Canal. Along with his report, Dr. Dawson published a map in three sections, giving details and particulars of his circular trip to the country which has since become so famous.

It would appear from a reference made to "Dawson" by a lady, who

has wintered there (1898-9) that the climate for a portion of the year at least is very enjoyable. The lady writes (April 8): "The March month of the Yukon is one of the gems of the year. Of all that dwell in my memory, this March, spent in the Yukon, has been incomparably the finest; from first to last a series of still, fair, sunshiny days, each lengthening and warming into greater geniality, until now in these last hours the little hill-encircled basin and its bit of the big Yukon river is flooded with sunshine; the surface of the ground is soft enough to demand the pulling off of moccasins and felt boots, and the daylight lasts far into the evening.

"Scanning the past weeks, we recall nothing of the raw wind, or rude or blustering blizzard—only a gentle, continuous mellowing from mid-winter severity, and a gradual, gracious extension of warmth and light.

"It seems absurd to have to come to the sub-arctics to deify March, yet here in this windless valley of the Yukon it has been a glorious month throughout."

Since the present gold excitement has taken place in the Yukon district, there has been considerable irritation manifested by United States citizens relative to the boundary line between Alaska (formerly "Russian-America") and British territory. The latter includes the North-West Territories of Canada and the province of British Columbia, which are separated from each other by the 60th parallel of latitude. Here again there has occurred some friction, as a new gold-field, Atlin, was discovered last summer, partly on the boundary line just mentioned. Miners having claims on the north side of this line are subject to the North-West Territories' mining regulations, whilst those on the south side must comply with the British Columbia mining regulations, which are in some respects different from those of the North-West Territories.

Again, as if to complicate matters still more, an alien Act was passed last session by the Parliament of British Columbia, restricting citizens of the United States, and other aliens, from taking up mining claims in British Columbia, and thus placing them on the same footing as Canadian miners in the United States. Many of those aliens have left Atlin. Some of them have crossed the boundary line (141st meridian) to Alaska proper; others have gone towards Dawson. The line of demarcation between British Columbia and the North-West Territories is now being surveyed and marked out. There is pressing need for the permanent location of the boundary line between Alaska and Canada from the Arctic Ocean southwards to Cape Chacon.

There is no difficulty in locating the line of demarcation from the Arctic Ocean south to the Pacific Ocean on the 141st meridian, according to the Anglo-Russian Treaty of 1825. That meridian passes a few miles to the west of Mount St. Elias, and the boundary should only reach to within ten marine leagues of the ocean coast, at the Gulf of Alaska, and then proceed, according to the Treaty, ten marine leagues distant therefrom, until it reach Cross Sound or Cape Spencer, leaving the "strip of land" mentioned in the Treaty as belonging to the United States.

Then starting from the point where the strip of land on the mainland ends, the line is continued parallel to the ocean coast and follows its windings south-eastwards down to lat. 56° N., not at any part of it receding more than ten marine leagues from the ocean; the outer or landward side of this strip of land (or land and water) is to follow the summit of the mountains situated parallel to the coast, where such summit shall prove to be at a distance of not more than ten marine leagues from the ocean.

As a portion of Prince of Wales Island lies north of the 56th parallel of latitude, and as the whole of that island is assigned to Russia, the Treaty accordingly directs that the line of demarcation shall commence from the southernmost extremity of the island (Cape Chacon), and shall ascend north along the channel which bounds the island itself, and which is shown on the map as "Clarence Strait" (otherwise called Portland Channel), to the point of the continent where it strikes the 56th parallel (*i.e.* at the 132nd meridian). From that point the boundary as above described proceeds in a north-westerly direction to the mainland at Cross Sound, thence to the 141st meridian and on that meridian to the Arctic or frozen ocean.

It may probably suit the High Joint Commission to agree to the foregoing interpretation of the Treaty, which is believed by hundreds of Canadians to be correct; or they may modify it somewhat, by making a conventional water-boundary from Cross Sound throughout, running to the east of Chichagof, Baranof, and Kuiu islands to the northern end of Prince of Wales Island, thence to Clarence Strait and Ernest Sound, where the 56th parallel of latitude strikes the continent. Such a line of demarcation would be suitable and convenient both to Great Britain and the United States, and would restore to British Columbia her original frontier, which has been sadly encroached on since 1867.

THE TRASCASPIAN DESERT.

At the time of the International Geological Congress held at St. Petersburg in 1897, Professor Georg Boehm¹ and Professor J. Walther joined the Ural excursion and visited Transcaspia. Crossing the Caucasus and the Caspian Sea, they arrived at Krasnovodsk, now the terminus of the railway. The town stands 70 feet below the level of the ocean, at the foot of steep bare walls of rock, which leave a small strip free along the shore. Krasnovodsk is rapidly rising in importance. It has hardly a drop of fresh water, and all the water for drinking purposes is brought by the railway from Jebel, or distilled from sea-water. Vegetation, too, is entirely absent, and the heat and dust in summer are almost unbearable. Nevertheless, the traffic of the port increases rapidly from year to year.

A rather steep path leads to the heights above, where a Persian

¹ *Geographische Zeitschrift*, Heft 5.

In transferring, use a medium weight folder, entering the same heading as on this folder. Do not wait until the folder becomes too bulky. It is better to transfer often rather than to fill the folder too full.

The best system is to transfer individual folders as soon as they are well filled, instead of transferring entire contents to drawer. The AL-6 Transfer Case is best adapted to this purpose, as it has wood ends and half again the filing capacity of the AL-4.

IN ORDERING DUPLICATES, SPECIFY

NO. 15-T. HEAVY FOLDER

Manufactured by

The Macey Co.

GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN



rown
oes b
a Se
limit
r wh
ther
best
sothe
ut th
requ
T
lnd s
ines
t avou
as d
tasily
owar
that i
T
on cl
leter
auth
prof
may
Anot
to d
s grow
c and
right
b ece
Eng
P
w
of in
o: extr
i: n th
c: Farc
r: tree
i: no
ted
nort
Sea.
d:
Mr
abu
P of
a with
l: able
Pins
sun
ind
mo
I 50t VOL